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February 9, 2011

The Honorable Members of the Connecticut General Assembly
Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building
Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: written testimony – H.B. 5008 –An Act Concerning the Quarantine of Biting Guide Dogs

Dear Members:

The Mission of the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation is single-mindedly focused on "...promoting increased independence to men and women who are blind by providing them with the highest quality Guide Dogs."

Fidelco's highest priority, at all times, is the safety of our Guide Dog/Client-Handler teams. With over 1,300 Guide Dog placements in 35 states and four Canadian provinces, including over 250 Guide Dog placements in Connecticut, there has never been a fatality associated with our Guide Dogs' work.

All Fidelco Guide Dogs that are approved for placement with a legally blind client must pass an extensive six-month training program. This includes three different "blindfold walks" with Certified Trainer/Instructors who are not involved with the particular Guide Dog's training. During these blindfold walks, Fidelco staff place their own lives in the abilities of the Guide Dog In-Training to perform its job in a real world environment of traffic, construction, noise and other distractions. This is the same world that our blind Client-Handlers navigate every day.

All Fidelco Guide Dogs that are delivered to our Client-Handlers comply with state and federal requirements regarding vaccinations. Upon completion of the

Office 860-243-5200

Fax 860-769-0567

103 Old Iron Ore Road, Bloomfield, CT 06002

www.fidelco.org



Guide Dog placement, it is the Client-Handler's responsibility to maintain all vaccinations as required by law.

Fidelco provides 24/7 resources to assist with daily problem solving when requested by our Client-Handlers. Fidelco also recently implemented annual in-community follow-up visits to insure the safety, health and wellbeing of the Guide Dog/Client-Handler teams.

Fidelco is not in the business of advocacy or policy-making. Fidelco also is not in the position to provide expert commentary on matters of public health policy, including dog bite incidents.

Fidelco is, however, uniquely positioned to provide expertise regarding the specialized nature of Guide Dogs, their training, function and role as a partner to a blind person. Given our extensive experience and expertise with Guide Dogs, we offer the following for the Committee's consideration and further discussion:

Mandatory quarantine: Should this course of action be determined by the Legislature to be in the public's best interest, and if the Guide Dog is determined to have all appropriate vaccinations required by law, we would recommend that this quarantine be implemented in the home of the owner/keeper and NOT in a public pound or kennel facility, regardless of where the bite incident occurred. The specifics of quarantine period, and the concomitant requirements regarding the prevention of further incidents during the quarantine period, would be a matter of public health and safety policy.

Mandatory notification: Regardless of whether mandatory quarantine is determined to be an appropriate or inappropriate course of action as the outcome of the legislative process, the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation respectfully suggests that language requiring mandatory notification of all Guide Dog bite incidents to the providing Guide Dog organization become part of any outcome of this review process.

Our experience suggests that all dogs, including Guide Dogs, would benefit from some sort of "cooling off" period following any bite incident (dog to dog or dog to person). Mandatory notification would help Fidelco and other Guide Dog organizations become informed in a timely manner so that we could provide necessary follow-up evaluation of the Guide Dog/Client-Handler Team in order to properly assess their continued safety.

Respectfully submitted,



Eliot D. Russman
CEO and Executive Director



General Assembly

January Session, 2011

Committee Bill No. 5008

LCO No. 2389

02389HB05008ENV

Referred to Committee on Environment

Introduced by:
(ENV)

AN ACT CONCERNING THE QUARANTINE OF BITING GUIDE DOGS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsection (c) of section 22-358 of the general statutes is
2 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*
3 *October 1, 2011*):

4 (c) If such officer finds that the complainant has been bitten or
5 attacked by such dog, cat or other animal when the complainant was
6 not upon the premises of the owner or keeper of such dog, cat or other
7 animal the officer shall quarantine such dog, cat or other animal in a
8 public pound or order the owner or keeper to quarantine it in a
9 veterinary hospital, kennel or other building or enclosure approved by
10 the commissioner for such purpose. When any dog, cat or other animal
11 has bitten a person on the premises of the owner or keeper of such
12 dog, cat or other animal, the Chief Animal Control Officer, any animal
13 control officer, any municipal animal control officer or regional animal
14 control officer may quarantine such dog, cat or other animal on the
15 premises of the owner or keeper of such dog, cat or other animal. The
16 commissioner, the Chief Animal Control Officer, any animal control

17 officer, any municipal animal control officer or any regional animal
18 control officer may make any order concerning the restraint or
19 disposal of any biting dog, cat or other animal as the commissioner or
20 such officer deems necessary. Notice of any such order shall be given
21 to the person bitten by such dog, cat or other animal within twenty-
22 four hours. The owner of such animal shall pay all fees as set forth in
23 section 22-333. On the fourteenth day of such quarantine the dog, cat
24 or other animal shall be examined by the commissioner or someone
25 designated by the commissioner to determine whether such quarantine
26 shall be continued or removed. Whenever any quarantine is ordered
27 under the provisions of this section, notice thereof shall be given to the
28 commissioner and to the person bitten or attacked by such dog, cat or
29 other animal within twenty-four hours. Any owner or keeper of such
30 dog, cat or other animal who fails to comply with such order shall be
31 fined not more than two hundred fifty dollars or imprisoned not more
32 than thirty days or both. If an owner or keeper fails to comply with a
33 quarantine or restraining order made pursuant to this subsection, the
34 Chief Animal Control Officer, any animal control officer, any
35 municipal animal control officer or regional animal control officer may
36 seize the dog, cat or other animal to insure such compliance and the
37 owner or keeper shall be responsible for any expenses resulting from
38 such seizure. Any person aggrieved by an order of any municipal
39 animal control officer, the Chief Animal Control Officer, any animal
40 control officer or any regional animal control officer may request a
41 hearing before the commissioner within fourteen days of the issuance
42 of such order. After such hearing, the commissioner may affirm,
43 modify or revoke such order as the commissioner deems proper. Any
44 dog owned by a police agency of the state or any of its political
45 subdivisions is exempt from the provisions of this subsection when
46 such dog is under the direct supervision, care and control of an
47 assigned police officer, has been vaccinated annually and is subject to
48 routine veterinary care. Any guide dog owned or in the custody and
49 control of a blind person or a person with a mobility impairment is
50 exempt from the provisions of this subsection when such guide dog is

- 51 under the direct supervision, care and control of such person, has been
52 vaccinated annually and is subject to routine veterinary care.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	October 1, 2011	22-358(c)
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Statement of Purpose:

To exempt certain guide dogs from quarantine requirements when they bite an individual.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]

Co-Sponsors: REP. ARESIMOWICZ, 30th Dist.

H.B. 5008